DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 408 412 UD 031 770

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TITLE Standing Outside on the Inside. Black Adolescents and the Construction of Academic Identity. SUNY Series, The Social Context of Education.

REPORT NO ISBN-0-7914-3342-0
PUB DATE 97
NOTE 144p.
AVAILABLE FROM State University of New York Press, State University Plaza, Albany, NY 12246 (paperback: ISBN-0-7914-3342-0, $14.95; clothbound: ISBN-0-7914-3341-2).
PUB TYPE Books (010) -- Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Access to Education; *Adolescents; *Black Students; *College Preparation; *Enrichment Activities; *Equal Education; High Schools; Program Development; Self Concept; Urban Schools; Urban Youth
IDENTIFIERS African Americans; Identity Formation; *Project EXCEL

ABSTRACT

Project EXCEL, developed from a 2-year pilot study, provided college enrichment in reading, writing, and foreign languages for rising sophomores and sophomores in two inner-city high schools. One school had a predominantly black student body; the other had a student body that was 40% black. This study focused on the sources of equality and oppression in society that affect the achievement of African American students who have the potential but not the skills to go to college and it investigated their experiences in Project EXCEL and its effects on students' academic identities. Chapter 1, "Education and Equal Opportunity: The Failed Promise," examines barriers to academic achievement for African American students. Chapter 2, "Precollege Enrichment for African American Adolescents and the Construction of Achievement Identities: Is There a Relationship?," addresses attitudes toward scholarship and their relation to college preparation for African Americans. In Chapter 3, "The Lana Turner Syndrome: African American Achievement and the Dream Deferred," case studies of achievement that rests on being discovered are presented. Chapter 4, "Diffusing the Rumors of Inferiority: Creating a Climate of Excellence," addresses the complex problem of underachievement. In Chapter 5, "Equal Access to Excellence: Shifting the Center and Reconstructing Knowledge," reviews the history of barriers to equal access and offers some alternatives to bring about school reform and equal education. (Contains 109 references.) (SLD)

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